

PUTTING A STOP TO MISMANAGEMENT AT THE VA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, in 2014, Congress passed legislation with broad bipartisan support to improve access to and the quality of care for veterans in response to the nationwide scandal over manipulated wait times at the VA.

The Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act created a 3-year program to allow veterans to seek care from private providers if they live too far from a VA facility or cannot otherwise get an appointment within 14 days.

It also gave the VA Secretary the authority to fire senior executives for poor performance and required a top-to-bottom study of the entire Department to be completed within 1 year of enactment.

When government failure is exposed and legislation aimed at restoring accountability is enacted, it makes sense that action would be swift and immediate, people would be fired, and wrongs would begin to be made right. Unfortunately, that has not been the case at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

While there are as many as 1,000 employees that could potentially face disciplinary actions, the VA has punished a total of eight for involvement in the scandal. We continue to hear about unacceptable patient wait times, unanswered benefit inquiries, patient safety concerns, medical malpractice, flagrant mismanagement, infighting, corruption, and years of construction delays that total millions of dollars.

Frustration, anger, outrage, Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the words that describe how I and other Americans felt when we read these latest stories about problems within the Department of Veterans Affairs. The continued ineptitude at the highest levels of the Department of Veterans Affairs is simply unacceptable. It is past time to put an end to this agency-wide pattern of mismanagement.

Last month, the House continued its efforts to fulfill the commitment we have made to those who have served by approving several pieces of legislation to further improve accountability at the VA.

We also passed legislation to increase access to education programs for veterans and to encourage small businesses to hire them. While it will never be enough, this legislation is a positive step forward in meeting our responsibility to America's veterans.

However, Congress cannot transform the VA alone. It is the President's responsibility to ensure changes are made within the agency and that employees are held accountable for their actions. Unfortunately, that is not happening.

Every day, we hear only more stories about further misdeeds. President Obama must commit to reforming the VA with more than just lip service. America's veterans deserve a meaningful, decisive plan to right the many wrongs.

As a country, we are uniquely blessed. We live in a nation where each of us has the possibility of nearly limitless fulfillment and prosperity in the world's finest democracy. That unparalleled freedom and opportunity has been made available to us because of the profound sacrifices of those who have fought for and defended our Nation.

America's veterans deserve better than the inexcusable misconduct and neglect that we have seen over the last few years at the VA. It is critically important that we provide high-quality, timely care for those who have sacrificed so much to our country.

Republicans are committed to that principle and to the veterans of this country.

URBAN FLOODING AWARENESS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, as Members of Congress continue to debate whether or not climate change is real, Americans are paying the price. To the climate doubters that I serve with, I will remind them that there are over 200 peer-reviewed scientific studies that conclude that climate change is real and that man contributes to it, and there are zero peer-reviewed scientific studies that say the opposite.

Climate change often brings images to mind of melting icecaps and rising sea levels, but the effects of climate change are being felt every day by people around the country. Climate change is causing even more destructive storms which, when combined with our aging infrastructure, is resulting in cities around the country being pummeled by urban flooding.

A little more than 2 years ago, residents in my district endured their second 100-year flood in a mere 3 years. A 100-year storm means that there is a 1 percent chance that a storm of that magnitude will happen every year, but folks in Chicago are experiencing these storms with greater intensity and frequency.

The morning after the rains bombarded Chicago in 2013, I visited numerous community members and their homes. The damage I saw was devastating: thousands of homes and businesses flooded; tons of carpeting, furniture, and memories are ruined; businesses shattered; and entrepreneurs' dreams crushed, along with millions of dollars in damages.

Throughout the region, we saw the closure of schools, libraries, and even hospitals were forced to relocate patients. That kind of devastation cannot

be ignored. Our constituents cannot be ignored.

In Chicago, over the past century, we have seen countless storms that have caused pipes to back up into houses and dump upwards of 1.5 inches of rain in a single day. What is more, rains of more than 2.5 inches a day are expected to increase another 50 percent in the next 20 years.

The National Climate Assessment, released by the Obama administration last year, predicted that the frequency and intensity of the Midwest's heaviest downpours will more than double over the next 100 years. That means even more trouble for our Nation's already deteriorating infrastructure and the cities around the country that rely on that infrastructure to keep them safe. Storm drains are outdated; sewers are inadequate, and families are at risk.

Whether it is because of flooded pipes or the lack of permeable surfaces in our cities, our constituents are paying the prices. Thousands of households in America are affected every year by urban flooding, yielding catastrophic economic, environmental, and social damage in some of our country's largest cities. Basements with water damage decrease property values by an estimated 10 to 25 percent.

But the impacts don't end there. Chronically damp houses can cause respiratory problems and higher insurance costs. Additionally, almost two out of five small businesses cannot open after experiencing a flooding disaster. Urban flooding erodes streams and riverbeds and degrades the quality of our drinking water sources and the health of our aquatic ecosystems.

It is time we come up with a national response to this growing problem. That is why I am proud to introduce the Urban Flooding Awareness Act. This legislation will finally create a definition of urban flooding to be used when designing flood maps and will require a first-of-its-kind study to analyze the costs associated with urban flooding and develop solutions. It would also help us better protect downstream communities from the flooding impacts of development in upstream areas.

Existing regulatory and policy mechanisms are not adequate for this task. It is time we develop new strategies. By identifying the most effective and economical remedies to urban flooding, we are better preparing our communities to defend themselves against the devastation caused by increasingly intense weather.

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And investing in real solutions to this problem now is the only way to avoid higher costs down the road. We can learn from our successes and investigate innovative new strategies for funding crucial new programs that eliminate flood risk and damage. Our cities need the best tools available if they are going to survive this era of supersized storms.

THE RAINS OF MAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the rains came down and the floods came up. And although Texas did not receive Noah's 40 days and 40 nights of rain, the recent 10 days of rain were of Biblical proportions.

The whole State received the incessant rain. And about the time we thought it was all over on Saturday morning, it all happened again Saturday night, flooding many of the same homes and communities throughout the State.

In Houston, six, so far, have died. Statewide, there are now 24 deaths. Eleven are still missing in Hays County when the Blanco River rose so fast at night it trapped people in over 200 resort homes that were on the river—homes that eventually washed away. Many of Texas' rivers—the Trinity, the Colorado, the Brazos, and the San Jacinto—rose at rapid record rates and are still out of their banks.

Weather experts, Mr. Speaker, said so much rain fell in Texas in May that it was enough moisture to cover the entire State in 8 inches of water. That is a lot of rain. Seventy counties have been designated disaster areas. But the rainbow news, Mr. Speaker, is that many, many voluntarily helped their neighbors and strangers survive the troubled waters of the floods.

Here is just one example. The hard rain in Dallas flooded the Trinity River. Dallas is in north Texas. The Trinity River flows south down to southeast Texas near Houston, and the added rain in southeast Texas had the Trinity River the size of the Mississippi River.

As the river rose in southeast Texas, a herd of cattle were trapped in the middle of the river on high ground. This high ground was eventually going to be overcome with water and the cattle would be washed out to sea. The river at this point is between the two small towns of Liberty and Dayton, about 6 miles apart, separated by U.S. highway 90.

So Sunday, in a scene reminiscent of the 1800s roundups, cowboys mounted airboats—yes, airboats, Mr. Speaker—to force the hundreds of cattle into the river and have them swim to safer ground. The only area that had high ground was U.S. highway 90. The highway was above the water, even though water was on both sides of the highway.

The roundup took several hours because, Mr. Speaker, cattle are hard-headed. They did not want to leave the high ground and swim to a highway. So it took several hours to do this. Even the cowboys were lassoing calves and tying them to the airboat so they wouldn't drown. Finally, after many hours, all the cattle were forced up on U.S. highway 90 between Liberty and Dayton, Texas.

Now, what do you do with them? Well, the cowboys, now on horses,

along with citizens and other volunteers, herded the cattle down U.S. highway 90 to Dayton, Texas, through Main Street of Dayton, Texas. The citizens came out with their kids to see the cattle drive through Dayton, Texas, and they moved these several hundred of cattle to a rail yard where they will be kept, that is the highest area in the county, until the flood waters finally are diminished.

Of course, local businesses helped out: a local store, Casa Don Boni in Liberty; and, of course, the Sonic, always present in Dayton, supported the volunteers with food and drinks; and other businesses as well helped. This is an example of how, during a troubled time, tough times, Texans are helping each other survive this catastrophic flooding.

So, now, Mr. Speaker, that the rains that came down and the flood that came up have subsided and the earth has returned to its dry land, our prayers go out to the ones who lost family, friends, and property. God bless every one of them. And we also give grateful thanks to those that helped each other during the floods of May.

And that is just the way it is.

RECOGNIZING LE GRAND UNION HIGH SCHOOL AND DOS PALOS HIGH SCHOOL IN SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two exemplary high schools in my district: Le Grand Union High School and Dos Palos High School.

In California's San Joaquin Valley, one of the most economically challenged regions of the Nation, having access to a quality education is critical for our young people, and these two schools shine on both the State and national levels.

Recently, both Le Grand and Dos Palos were acknowledged by the U.S. News & World Report's annual grading as among the top high schools in America. Not only are Le Grand High School and Dos Palos among the best in Merced County, but they both ranked among the top five high schools in our region. Their accomplishments show how our students, with the right encouragement and support, in fact, can succeed.

Students, regardless of their socioeconomic status or being college bound, deserve a quality education that prepares them for the road ahead. And both Le Grand and Dos Palos High Schools are doing just that. Mr. Speaker, 81 percent of the students at Le Grand High School and 97 percent of the students at Dos Palos High School qualify as low-income.

These are challenging and difficult areas. I am proud to say that, at both Le Grand High School and Dos Palos, approximately half of all enrollees are

in AP classes and taking the end-of-year test for college credit. Now, what does that mean? It means that every day these students are actively seizing opportunities to change their lives for the better, and for that, we are glad.

Mr. Speaker, when our students succeed, our Nation succeeds because, after all, they are the future of America. The great success of these students would not be possible without the amazing support of both the faculty and the staff at both high schools. These are the teachers and educators who see promise in our students and inspire them to follow their dreams and progress, teachers who have dedicated their professional careers to public education in America.

To Le Grand Union High School Principal Javier Martinez, the Le Grand Union High School faculty and staff, their board of directors, and the Le Grand student body, job well done.

To the Dos Palos High School Principal Heather Ruiz, the Dos Palos High School faculty and staff, the Dos Palos-Oro Loma School District Board of Trustees, and to that student body, again, a job well done.

Let me take this opportunity to say a big thank-you to all of you, and congratulations in achieving the Silver Medal Award given annually by the U.S. News & World Report. Your collective academic achievement is a source of pride not only in our community, but throughout the Nation.

Most importantly, all of you are making a difference, making a difference for our students. Thank you for setting the example, and thank you for the difference you are making in their lives. It is an honor and a privilege to represent you, and keep up the good work.

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. POMPEO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POMPEO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss an issue that is incredibly important not only to America, but to the folks who I represent in south central Kansas. We need to make sure that in south central Kansas we have the opportunity to access markets all over the world and to sell the great products that we make.

Mr. Speaker, it sometimes sounds like just statistics, but in 2014, \$12 billion in goods from over 3,000 companies were exported outside of Kansas. In the Fourth District alone, over \$3.8 billion was exported, making Wichita and south central Kansas one of the three top exporting metros in the entire United States of America.

When you visit Wichita, you can see that. If you travel around south central Kansas, you will find great aerospace companies, companies like Learjet, Cessna, Beechcraft, and Airbus, manufacturing goods that are sold all across the world. They need access to these markets overseas. We make the 737 fuselage right in Wichita, Kansas.